

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY BOARD PRESIDENT TONI PRECKWINKLE APPOINTS “NEXT CENTURY CONSERVATION PLAN” COMMISSION

Feb 4, 2013

Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle announced the appointment of a new commission to advise the District, and its partners, Openlands and Metropolis Strategies, on the creation of the Next Century Conservation Plan.

“In 1913 a group of committed, visionary citizens established the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, the first of its kind in the nation, with a mission to preserve land so nature would remain an integral part of Cook County life for the education, recreation, and enjoyment of its residents,” Preckwinkle said.

“One hundred years later, the District is the largest forest preserve in the country. It is poised to develop a plan to re-establish itself as a leader in urban biodiversity conservation, environmental education and outdoor recreation. And, once again, a group of prominent, spirited citizens, will play a role in the creation of this ambitious effort.”

To accomplish those goals, the District is partnering with Metropolis Strategies and Openlands to create a Next Century Conservation Plan. The plan will prepare the District for the growing challenges of conserving nature, such as habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and climate change.

The Next Century Conservation Plan will be guided by a commission formed of civic leaders who represent the diverse fields the plan will address. Lead funding for the plan is provided by the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust.

The members of the commission are:

Co-chairs:

- John McCarter, President Emeritus, Field Museum
- Wendy Paulson, Board Member, Openlands
- Arthur R. Velasquez, Chairman, Azteca Foods
- Eric Whitaker, M.D., M.P.H., Executive Vice President of Strategic Affiliations & Associate Dean of Community-Based Research, University of Chicago Medicine

Commission Members:

- Lee Bey, Executive Director, Chicago Central Area Committee
- Frank M. Clark III, Founder and Managing Partner, Clark Enterprises Group, LLC
- James Gay, Superintendent, Consolidated High School District 230 of Orland Park
- Joseph Gregoire, State Chairman for Illinois Banking, PNC Bank
- Terry Guen, FASLA, Principal Landscape Architect, Terry Guen Design Associates, Inc.
- Lori Healey, CEO, Tur Partners LLC
- Troy Henikoff, Co-Founder and CEO, Excelerate Labs
- Sylvia Jenkins, Ph.D., President, Moraine Valley Community College
- Luis Nieto, President, Nieto Advisory LLC

- Lisa Thornton, M.D., Medical Director of Pediatric and Adolescent Rehabilitation, Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital
- Don A. Turner, President Emeritus, Chicago Federation of Labor

Ex Officio Members:

- Arnold Randall, General Superintendent, Forest Preserve District of Cook County
- Sophia Siskel, President & CEO, Chicago Botanic Garden
- Stuart Strahl, President & CEO, Chicago Zoological Society

Senior Advisors:

- Gerald W. Adelman, President & CEO, Openlands
- Mary A. Laraia, Deputy General Superintendent, Forest Preserve District of Cook County
- George Ranney, President & CEO, Metropolis Strategies
- Victoria Ranney, President, Liberty Prairie Foundation

The Next Century Conservation Plan will address the Preserves in a 21st century context. It will consider issues such as biological diversity, land use, sustainability and ecosystem services, how nature and open space contribute to the region's economic growth and public health, public awareness and education in the context of changing demographics, and financial sustainability.

The planning process will include outreach to key stakeholders, experts and a variety of advisors from different fields. In addition, national research on best practices will

provide a foundation for the Next Century Plan. Public input will be solicited through a website, interviews and focus groups. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2013.

Additional efforts related to the District's centennial celebration will be announced in late Spring.

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The Forest Preserve District of Cook County is the oldest and largest forest preserve system in the nation, maintaining more than 68,000 acres of open land for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public. The District strives to protect and restore the county's diverse ecosystems, so all our unique native plants and animals can live and thrive. Each year, millions of visitors use these lands and facilities to enjoy or study nature, bicycle, hike, fish, cross-country ski, picnic, golf, canoe, or simply relax in a large preserve that leaves urban life behind. For more information on the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, visit www.fpdcc.com.